

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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INTERIOR SCIENTIST AND WIFE SEARCH FOR FOREIGN GAME BIRDS

Wildlife agencies have recognized the possibility of failure or harm in hit-and-miss introductions of exotic birds into the United States. So State and Federal agencies joined forces 22 years ago to send a scientist abroad for field studies to identify species worthy of trial introduction.

The scientist was Gardiner Bump of the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. He and his wife (she works without pay) are still at it. In a score of years they have jeeped and slogged through more than a half-million miles of back country on most continents seeking facts about game birds. In their words:

"We have found the nests, collected the eggs, and hatched and raised the chicks of capercaillie in Scandinavia.

"We have studied the life history and habitat of the leg-strong chukar in Asia Minor.

"We have identified the foods, checked the habits, and surveyed the diseases and parasites of seese partridges in West Pakistan and the red-leg in Spain.

"We have watched the white-wing pheasant on her nesting grounds along the Russian border and sampled the tough, dark meat of the snowcock in a Cuchi tent with the nomads of Afghanistan."

Throughout their travels, they have never sensed serious danger from native inhabitants. Once, they passed through an area of Baluchistan where two weeks earlier local tribesmen had killed three Americans. They were in Argentine back country, but completely unaffected by the overthrow of the Argentine Government and subsequent take-over by General Ongania in 1966.

Dr. Bump explains their good relations with diverse peoples thus:

"We are scrupulously honest, obey local laws, respect local customs, and show by deed and word our friendliness for people in all lands."

Their work is underway primarily because State wildlife agencies and private groups recognize the need for locating and testing exotic game birds that might thrive in U.S. areas underpopulated with native species. Outside urban areas, one-fifth of the United States has inadequate numbers of native game birds. Their work also has been given impetus by several successful transplants early in the century, such as the chukar partridge from India, the ring-necked pheasant from Asia, and the Hungarian partridge from Europe.

Before introduction, candidate species must be studied carefully. Those that might prove detrimental to U.S. agriculture, do not have good sporting characteristics, or are likely to compete seriously with native wildlife, must be rigorously screened out. All birds must be quarantined before and after shipment to minimize the chances of introducing diseases or parasites.

At least five game birds recommended for introduction into the United States by the Bumps have succeeded to the extent that open hunting seasons for them have been declared: Afghan white-winged pheasant in the Southwest; black and gray francolins from India in Hawaii; and the Iranian black-necked and Japanese green pheasants in Virginia.

The Bumps, in their sixties, are a few years from retirement, but Assistant Secretary Leslie L. Glasgow, who heads Interior's fish, wildlife, and parks programs, says:

"The Bumps will be remembered and will be the source of vital information for many years to come because of the reliability of their studies. They have considered more than 150 kinds of foreign birds and have ruled out all but 26 for trial transplant as game in our country. Mrs. Bump will be remembered for her outstanding work on parasites of game birds. It will take years for biologists to use fully the amount of scientific data they have acquired."

Details on the 26 candidate species are given in "Foreign Game Investigation, A Federal-State Cooperative Program." Copies may be obtained for 15 cents from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

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